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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT NICOSIA 2521 ACTION SECSTATE DTD 26 AUG 76

QTE: S E C R E T NICOSIA 2521

NODIS

FROM HOUGHTON AND MACK

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR LE

SUBJECT: TALKS WITH CHRISTIANS LEADERS

REF: NICOSIA 2491

SUMMARY: ON OUR RETURN TO JOUNIEH WE WILL NEED TO HAVE TALKING POINTS ENABLING US TO RESPOND TO THE FULL RANGE OF QUESTIONS WHICH VARIOUS CHRISTIAN LEADERS HAVE ASKED. WE ARE LISTING IN THIS CABLE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS RAISED BY MOST OF THE LEADERS AS WELL AS SOME QUESTIONS, ANSWERS TO WHICH WILL BE EXPECTED ONLY BY A SINGLE LEADER. WE WILL COMMENT AT THE END.

1. WHAT IS THE USG PREPARED TO DO FOR LEBANON POLITICALLY? SPECIFICALLY, WILL WE SUPPORT FORMATION OF RECONSTRUCTION

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AND MILITARY CONSORTIA PER THE "BROWN PLAN"? WILL WE

GIVE SYRIA POLITICAL ENCOURAGEMENT AND PROTECTION TO CONTINUE ITS INTERVENTION IN LEBANON? WILL OUR SUPPORT OF SYRIA INCLUDE SUPPORT OF SYRIA'S USE OF THE MILITARY FORCE NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVES? WILL WE USE OUR INFLUENCE TO PERSUADE EGYPT TO SEASE ITS SUPPORT OF THE PALESTINIAN SIDE AND TO SEASE ITS POLITICAL ATTACKS ON SYRIA? IS THE USG PREPARED TO USE ITS INFLUENCE TO PERSUADE THE WEALTHY ARAB STATES EITHER TO STOP FINANCIAL AID TO THE PALESTINIANS OR TO USE SUCH AID AS A LEVER TO FORCE PALESTINIAN ADHERENCE TO THE CAIRO ACCORDS? DO WE SEE ANY UTILITY IN EITHER (A) TRYING TO PERSUADE THE SOVIET UNION TO REDUCE ITS SUPPORT OF THE PALESTINIANS AND/OR (B) WORKING WITH THE SOVIET UNION TO HELP ACHIEVE A SETTLEMENT? SARKIS WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF THE SOVIET UNION IN THE CONFLICT.

2. ON THE MILITARY SIDE, WE ASSUME USG CONTINUES UNWILLING TO SUPPLY ARMS TO EITHER SIDE IN THE ABSENCE OF A SETTLEMENT BUT THAT ONCE A SETTLEMENT IS ACHIEVED WE WOULD BE WILLING TO HELP THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT REBUILD THEIR ARMY AND POLICE FORCES TO MAINTAIN INTERNAL SECURITY. PLEASE CONFIRM. A RELATED QUESTION WHICH WAS NOT ASKED BUT WHICH MAY WELL BE ASKED IS WHETHER THE USG WOULD ALLOW COMMERCIAL SALES OF MILITARY SUPPLIES TO THE CHRISTIAN SIDE. WE WILL NOT RAISE THE ISSUE BUT SHOULD FRANGIEH REFER AGAIN TO BUFFUM'S ALLEGED COMMITMENT TO SUPPLY ARMS IN THE EVENT OF AGGRESSION, WE ASSUME THE ANSWER IS THAT WHATEVER BUFFUM MAY HAVE SAID REFERRED TO SITUATIONS WHERE ANOTHER STATE PHYSICALLY ATTACKED LEBANON. PLEASE CONFIRM.

3. DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS: WILL WE ASSIGN US DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL TO RESIDE IN JOUNNIEH? ALTERNATIVELY, WILL WE MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR REGULAR AND FREQUENT VISITS TO JOUNIEH BY US DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL? WILL THE SECRETARY MEET WITH PIERRE GAMAYEL IF HE SHOULD COME TO WASHINGTON (A REQUEST OF GEMAYAL AND HIS SON ONLY)? WILL A DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL MEET WITH DORY CHAMOUN WHEN HE VISITS THE US IN THE NEAR FUTURE? (A REQUEST OF DORY CHAMOUN ONLY)? WILL THE USG RECEIVE AT A HIGH LEVEL AN ENVOY FROM SARKIS AFTER SEPTEMBER 23? (THIS ADEA WAS SUGGESTED BY MICHEL

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KHOURY BUT NOT RAISED BY SARKIS.)

4. ECONOMIC SIDE: PREACTICALLY NO ECONOMIC QUESTIONS WERE RAISED, PRESUMABLY BECAUSE OF THEIR PREOCCUPATION WITH THE MILITARY AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF THE PRESENT. DORY CHAMOUN DID ASK WHETHER THE USG WOULD HELP ARRANGE FINANCING FOR THE INSTALLATION IN CHRISTIAN-HELD LEBANON OF A GROUND STATION FOR SATELLITE COMMUNICATION. THE

PURPOSE IS OF COURSE TO PROVIDE A COMMUNICATION SYSTEM FROM CHRISTIAN LEBANON, WHICH AS OF NOW HAS NO COMMUNICATION WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD. THIS IS NOT AN OFFICIAL REQUEST AND WE WANT A POSITION ONLY FOR THE EVENTUALITY THAT DORY CHAMOUN RAISES IT AGAIN.

5. COMMENT: GIVEN THE BRIEFNESS OF OUR VISIT TO THE CHRISTIAN REGION AND THE FACT THAT WE HAVE DEALT WITH ONLY ONE SIDE OF THE CONFLICT, WE ARE HESITANT TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS. WE EMPHASIZED AS STRONGLY AS WE COULD TO THE MARONITE LEADERS THAT ON OUR RETURN TO JOUNIEH WE WOULD BE BRINGING ONLY REACTIONS TO THEIR POSITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS OF OUR POSITION. NONETHELESS, GIVEN THEIR ALMOST PARANOIC FEELING OF ABANDONMENT BY US, ANYTHING TANGIBLE WE CAN BRING BACK WHICH EVIDENCES USG INTEREST IN THEM WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE HELPFUL IN STRENGTHENING USG RELATIONS WITH THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS. WE COULDN'T POSSIBLY SATISFY THEM, BUT WE MIGHT MAKE THEM FEEL A BIT BETTER ABOUT US. THIS, OF COURSE, IS IMPORTANT PRIMARILY IN TERMS OF OUR ABILITY TO INFLUENCE THEM.

6. THE DESIRE FOR MORE DIPLOMATIC CONTACT WITH AMERICANS WAS EXPRESSED BY VIRTUALLY ALL TO WHOM WE SPOKE. THEIR FIRST CHOICE IS FOR DIPLOMATS RESIDING IN JOUNIEH, BUT IT PROVIDES SOME SATISFACTION WHEN, AS WITH THE FRENCH, DIPLOMATS STATIONED IN WEST BEIRUT MAKE PERIODIC VISITS HERE. WE BELIEVE THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD ALSO CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY THAT AN OFFICER COULD BE POSTED TO EMBASSY DAMASCUS WITH THE ASSIGNMENT OF MAKING FREQUENT AND REGULAR VISITS TO CHRISTIAN. (WITH THE COOPERATION OF CHRISTIAN AND SYRIAN AUTHORITIES IT IS A 3-4 HOUR TRIP FROM DAMASCUS TO JOUNIEH.) WE REALIZE IT WOULD TAKE TIME TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR REPRESENTATION ON THE
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CHRISTIAN SIDE, BUT WE BELIEVE THE TIMING OF THE ARRIVAL OF THE REPRESENTATIVE IS, WITHIN REASON, LESS IMPORTANT THAN A COMMITMENT FROM US TO THE MARONITE LEADERS TO MAKE SUCH ARRANGEMENTS IN THE NEAR FUTURE. FROM OUR NARROW OPTIC, WE CONSIDER THIS REQUEST OF THE MARONITES REASONABLE AND BELIEVE IT WOULD GREATLY REASSURE THE CHRISTIANS THAT WE ARE ALSO INTERESTED IN THEM.

7. IT WOULD, OF COURSE, ALSO BE EXTREMELY USEFUL AND HEARTENING TO THE CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP IF WE COULD TELL THEM OF ANY FURTHER STEPS WE HAVE TAKEN OR INTEND TO TAKE TO ASSIST A RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT.

8. THIS IS OUR LAST REPORTING CABLE.
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